The second biobusiness acceleration bootcamp

Supporting biological based innovation projects in six eastern Africa countries remains the core activity of BioInnovate Africa. The Programme funds 20 projects that are collaboratively implemented by scientists, businesspeople and government officers to transform biological-based ideas and inventions into commercially viable enterprises.

On 22-26 July 2019, the Programme held its second biobusiness acceleration bootcamp in Nairobi, which targeted its implementing partners for projects running for period 2019-2021. The week-long event streamlined expectations from scientists and business executives in project implementation and strengthened capacities of participating firms to commercialise new technology. The bootcamp also enabled participants to harmonise their roles and responsibilities as co-developers with a shared goal of introducing new products into the market.

Click here to read more about the second biobusiness acceleration bootcamp.

Financial training to do the right things right

In September 2019, BioInnovate Africa organised a financial management training workshop to strengthen capacities of finance and accounts officers managing the Programme’s project grants. The workshop was carried out in Kenya, and in Uganda. The two workshops were attended by finance and accounts officers from the six eastern Africa countries (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) where the Programme is implemented. Participants had a training experience that inspired them and sharpened their financial management skills for effective project delivery.

Mr Harold Adiga, from Uganda, attended the training and said it enabled him to understand, appreciate and adhere to the recommended financial management practices and reporting of the Programme. “I now have a better understanding of good and bad grant management practices which I will apply to better manage BioInnovate Africa project grant and others that I support in my organization,” he said.

Ms Veronica Gichana, from Kenya, also attended the training and said it was timely and helpful to her day-to-day grants’ management work. “The facilitators were engaging and took the time to thoroughly answer the questions raised by the participants,” she said.

Read more about the financial management training workshop; click here for the training held in Kenya, and here for the training held in Uganda.

Regional bioeconomy strategy

BioInnovate Africa is supporting the development of a regional innovation-driven bioeconomy strategy for eastern Africa. On 30 September – 1 October 2019, the Programme organized a workshop in Nairobi on building scenarios for the strategy, in collaboration with African Technology Policy Studies (ATPS) and the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO). The participants comprised stakeholders from eastern African countries representing academia, civil society and community based organizations, industrial and commercial firms, government and policy makers. The key outcome was identification of bioeconomy priority areas informed by national and regional needs to guide the development of the strategy. The first draft of the strategy is currently under review.
The second women scientists fellowship begins

Following a successful completion of the first BioInnovate Africa Women Scientists Fellowship initiative, the Programme is pleased to announce commencement of its second women fellowship initiative. A total of 13 fellows were selected for the second cohort which runs from October 2019 to September 2020. The fellows work with mentors in the different project implementing partner organisations supported by the Programme, outside their country, for four to six months. During this period, fellows gain experience and establish networks to advance their skills, innovation capacity and overall career progression.

Two of the selected fellows share their anticipation about the fellowship below:

“My name is Diana Namanyanja, from Uganda, and I am an entomologist by profession. I have been posted to icipe in Nairobi, Kenya, where I am undertaking my fellowship research on product development from edible grasshopper (Ruspelia differens). I hope to gain new knowledge and skills on how to be innovative with research products, specifically on insect science for food and feed. Coming from a country where entomophagy is real, especially with the grasshopper, new knowledge on their utilization for commercial will be of great gains.”

Ms Fonda Jane Awuor

“My name is Fonda Jane Awuor, from Kenya, a socio-economist by profession. I am based at the East Africa Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) in Kigali, Rwanda, where I am undertaking my fellowship in contributing to the development of a Bioeconomy Strategy for eastern Africa. I hope to equip myself with skills to enable my expansion of biobased business opportunities for economic empowerment of vulnerable groups including women and youths.”

Sixth Programme Advisory Committee meeting

The 6th BioInnovate Africa Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held in Bujumbura, Burundi, on 7 – 8 November 2019. The meeting was preceded by a high-level policy seminar on the role of the public sector in building innovation ecosystems for a sustainable economy, that was jointly organized by the University of Burundi and the Burundian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. A key recommendation from the seminar was the need for enhanced collaboration between universities, industry and government and for greater regional engagement.

After the seminar, the PAC participated in a ground-breaking event for the construction of a factory that will supply eastern Africa region with value-added malaria repellent products made from plant extracts. The event was organized by implementing partner organizations for the Programme’s project on Plant Extracts to prevent Malaria in eastern Africa. The PAC interacted with the project implementing team and witnessed the progress they are making in developing value-added malaria repellent products. The PAC also paid a courtesy visit to the Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research in Burundi, Hon. Prof Gaspard Banyankimbona, and discussed ways to strengthen scientific cooperation with Burundi.

Courtesy visit by SEI Board, Sweden

The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Board, led by its Chair, Kerstin Niblaeus, Vice-Chair Andreas Carlgen, and Ingrid Peterson, and accompanied by two representatives from SEI Africa Centre, paid a courtesy visit to BioInnovate Africa on 18 October 2019, at icipe Duduville Campus in Nairobi, where the Programme is based and managed.

The visiting team met with icipe Director General, Dr Segenet Kelemu, and had a briefing session on governance and operations of the Centre. The team toured BioInnovate Africa office and familiarized with the support the Programme gives to scientists and innovators in eastern Africa region to link biological based research ideas and technologies to business and the market. They also toured various research and innovation activities at the Centre.

SEI Africa Centre is an implementing partner organization of BioInnovate Africa’s project that is developing an innovation-led bioeconomy strategy for eastern Africa.
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