

**Press Release**

**Africa’s largest convening on bioeconomy**

9 November 2021, Nairobi, Kenya

The 2nd Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Conference will be held on 10 and 11 November 2021, organised by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology *(icipe)/*BioInnovate Africa in partnership with the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)-Africa Centre, and Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub.

The forum, Africa’s largest convening on bioeconomy, is expected to attract government officials, scientists, entrepreneurs, investors and civil society actors, convening virtually ([link](https://2ndbioeconomyconference.easteco.org/)), with limited in-person participation at *icipe*, under the theme: “Building a Sustainable and Resilient African Bioeconomy.”

Globally, the ideal of a bioeconomy is being embraced as a sustainable model that brings together the commercial activity surrounding the use of renewable biological resources – such as crops, forests, animals and micro-organisms (like bacteria), agricultural waste and residual materials – to solve challenges related to food, health, biodiversity and environmental protection, energy and industrial processes.

“Africa, with its rich biological diversity, and a relatively large proportion of arable land, is well positioned to tap into these opportunities, and build a competitive, sustainable bioeconomy,” notes Hon. (Dr.) Peter Mathuki, the East African Community (EAC) Secretary General. “Indeed, the model could enable the continent to innovate around its primary production especially in agriculture, the backbone of most economies in the region, and also in sectors like aquaculture, forestry, health and industry.”

**Renewed impetus for a bioeconomy**

This year’s event builds on the success of first Eastern African Bioeconomy Conference, held in 2020, that brought together 400 regional, continental and global participants including high-level policymakers, academia, scientists, innovators, funders, investors, business professionals and the media. The outcome was the adoption of an Eastern African Regional Bioeconomy Strategy developed by EASTECO and partners with support from BioInnovate Africa Programme. Also, an Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Observatory portal was launched to serve as a knowledge repository, and to enable monitoring of advances in bioeconomy in the region.

“The forthcoming forum takes place against the background of a continent that, alongside the rest of the world aims to deal with an ever growing array of existing and emerging challenges, like reducing carbon emissions; and to accelerate achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), while envisioning a transformative recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic,” Dr Segenet Kelemu, DG, *icipe*.

“Within this context, the need to strengthen health systems, reshape our food system to withstand shocks and serve people and the planet better, diversify incomes and economies to safeguard livelihoods, generate massive, diverse, lucrative and inclusive opportunities, with the most vulnerable at the centre, and mainstream science and innovation,” adds Dr Julius Ecuru, Manager, BioInnovate Africa.

This scenario provides renewed impetus for a bioeconomy. Thus, the conference participants will discuss how sustainable bioeconomy initiatives in Africa, especially those developing healthy foods, safer and more efficacious medicines, clean energy and water,

can contribute to the realisation of the SDGs. The discussion will draw from examples of bio-based innovations that broaden sources of growth, create new business prospects and link production to new markets, while changing lives and strengthening scientific capacity for research and innovation in the continent.

**Bioeconomy regionalisation**

The institutionalisation of a bioeconomy and its components of harnessing biosciences knowledge, technology generation, transfer and uptake, bioinnovations and accompanying products and services, institutions and policies, requires a range of supporting aspects. Moreover, a sustainable and resilient bioeconomy must embrace the three pillars of economic growth, biodiversity and environmental protection and social inclusion, while avoiding potential trade-offs between them.

These aspects demand increased investments in science, technology and innovation, and pivotal structures like policies and institutions, as well as collaboration and coordination of numerous stakeholders across the region.

Therefore, the conference will discuss bioeconomy regionalisation as the key path to realising optimum benefits, focusing on the opportunities for inter-Africa cooperation and cross continental collaboration in bioeconomy development. The deliberations will also explore how regional economic blocks like the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), among others, can anchor regional bioeconomy policies and strategies.

Participants will agree on concrete steps for cooperation across regions in research, innovation and bioentreprenuership partnerships, and in developing regional bioeconomy strategies. Thus, a central aspect will be creating momentum for implementing the Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Strategy, and how it could serve as a basis for a similar approach in other regions of Africa.

**Notes for Editors**

The **East Africa Science and Technology Commission** (<https://easteco.org/>) is an Institution of the East African Community (EAC). Its aim is to coordinate and facilitate the activities of the EAC partner states and national science and technology institutions to promote the development and application of science, technology and innovation in all its aspects.

**BioInnovate Africa** (<https://bioinnovate-africa.org/>) is an eastern Africa regional innovation-driven bioeconomy initiative supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented as a Programme of *icipe* based in Nairobi, Kenya. BioInnovate Africa aims to strengthen the capacity of universities, research institutes and firms in Eastern Africa to commercialise bio-based inventions and innovative research ideas and technologies by funding 20 bio-based innovation projects. The initiative’s strategy also includes developing a knowledge-based bioeconomy in eastern Africa. This is built on the premise that collaboration at the national and regional levels, and between researchers and private sector partners, is the surest way to translate scientific outputs into usable, and commercially scalable products and technologies.

The**International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology** ([www.icipe.org](http://www.icipe.org)) headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is the only research institution in Africa working primarily on insects and other arthropods. *icipe* mission is to ensure better food security,

health and livelihoods, by producing world-class knowledge and then developing solutions that are environmentally friendly, accessible, affordable and easy-to-use by communities. These objectives are delivered through four thematic areas — Human Health, Animal Health, Plant Health and Environmental Health, providing a platform to build the capacity and leadership of African scientists; enable collaboration with hundreds of researchers and partners across Africa and the world; as well as the effective transfer of technologies and strategies to end-users.

The **Stockholm Environment Institute** (<https://www.sei.org/>) is an international non-profit research and policy organisation that tackles environment and development challenges. The organisation connects science and decision-making to develop solutions for a sustainable future.

The **BecA-ILRI Hub** (<https://hub.africabiosciences.org/>) is a shared agricultural research and biosciences platform that exists to increase access to affordable, world-class research facilities. Located at and managed by ILRI in Nairobi, Kenya, the BecA-ILRI Hub provides a common biosciences research platform, research-related services and capacity building opportunities to eastern and central Africa and beyond.

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