




Improving lives through sustainable bioinnovations



Communication Strategy



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List of Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EU	European Union
<i>icipe</i>	International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology
IEC	Information Education Communication
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
MESHA	Media for Environment, Science, Health, and Agriculture in Kenya
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PMO	Programme Management Office
Q&A	Questions and Answers
QR	Quick Response
SciDevNet	Science and Development Network
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TV	Television
UN	United Nation

1. Introduction

The Bioresources Innovations Network for Eastern Africa Development Programme (BioInnovate Africa) was established in 2010 with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). To date, BioInnovate Africa is the largest and most active regional science and innovation-driven bioeconomy platform in Africa, with over 1,000 scientists/innovators in more than 200 organisations in eastern Africa as direct beneficiaries. Bioeconomy refers to the use of scientific knowledge to add economic and social value to biological resources in a sustainable manner, whether in food production, biowaste conversion, industrial processing, or environmental preservation.

The goal of BioInnovate Africa is to improve the productivity of smallholder farmers and communities in eastern Africa by making agro/bio processing a more competitive and environmentally sustainable enterprise. Its desired outcome is to enhance the capacity of eastern African universities, research organisations, and firms to translate modern biosciences into innovations, working collaboratively with smallholder farmers and agro-processing enterprises in the region.

In this regard, BioInnovate Africa:

- a.** Enables scientists, industry partners, and policy makers to co-create and translate innovative bioscience research ideas, inventions, and technologies into practical use for societal benefit.
- b.** Supports scientists and innovators to create sustainable bio-based enterprises.
- c.** Works with institutional leaders, policy, and decision makers to strengthen bio-based innovation ecosystems.

BioInnovate Africa is supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented as a regional programme of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*) in Nairobi, Kenya. Countries that are participating in BioInnovate Africa include: Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), councils, commissions and ministries of science, technology and innovation in eastern Africa are key partners of BioInnovate Africa.

This communication strategy provides a broad framework that BioInnovate Africa uses to systematically share knowledge and information generated within BioInnovate Africa with key stakeholders and audiences, including but not limited to, policy makers, researchers, business leaders and entrepreneurs, development partners, consumers, and the general public.

The strategy covers the period from April 2022 to December 2026 and may be revised periodically as needed.

2. Rationale

Communication is a two-way process that strategically links the right message with the right audience in the right manner. Successful communication adopts an audience-centred approach, which ensures responsive feedback as opposed to the one-way method that does not provide an opportunity for dialogue.

In general, public participation in decision-making on science and technology is weak in eastern Africa. This weak public involvement in science decision-making could be attributed in part to low levels of scientific literacy among the public. This, in turn, could be ascribed to inadequate communication of science to the public and policymakers. Consequently, policymakers and the public are poorly informed about the returns on investment in science and technology in their communities and countries.

The communication strategy, therefore, focuses on effectively engaging with policymakers, academics, and industry partners in eastern Africa on important biology-based ideas, inventions, and technologies, which is the domain of BioInnovate Africa. Engaging with these stakeholders in BioInnovate Africa participating countries of Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda will not only improve scientific literacy in these areas but also increase awareness and participation of target groups in BioInnovate Africa activities in the region.

The communication strategy outlines how BioInnovate Africa intends to inform various audiences in and outside eastern Africa about opportunities for investing in bioinnovations and engage with them in the process of developing a sustainable bioeconomy in the region. Through this, communities will be empowered to make decisions and choices on essential bioinnovations that enable the region to address its priorities of food security, environmental sustainability, and economic growth based on biological resources.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the communication strategy are to:

- a.** Increase awareness about technologies and products developed by BioInnovate Africa project implementing partners to appropriate target audiences.
- b.** Share opportunities created by BioInnovate Africa, such as calls for proposals, networking events, fellowships, and training course with target groups and beneficiaries in and outside the region.
- c.** Publicise events organised by *icipe* BioInnovate Africa, collaborating partners to specific target groups and the general public.
- d.** Provide a platform through the BioInnovate Africa website and social media for knowledge exchange within the BioInnovate Africa network as well as external stakeholders.

4. Target Audience and Key Messages

BioInnovate Africa target audiences are diverse. They include policymakers, academic scientists and researchers, business leaders and entrepreneurs, consumers of BioInnovate Africa products and communities, investors and development partners, the media, and the general public. These audiences are targeted with specific key messages that are appropriate to them at a given time (Table 1).

Table 1: BioInnovate Africa target audiences and key messages

No	Target audience	Key message ¹	Specific persons/organizations targeted
1	Policy makers	<p>a. BioInnovate Africa ensures countries in eastern Africa benefit from the revolutionary advances in biosciences and helps to translate bioinnovations into goods and services for inclusive growth and sustainable development;</p> <p>b. It is possible to build a vibrant innovation-driven bioeconomy in eastern Africa as demonstrated by BioInnovate Africa efforts and impact over the years</p>	Science, innovation and technology ministries within governments and commissions in the BioInnovate Africa countries of implementations
2	Academic scientists & researchers	BioInnovate Africa provides opportunities for academia and industry in EA to work together to commercialise bio-based technologies and products.	Current BioInnovate Africa partner universities and research and capacity building centers; Other universities and research and capacity building centers that focus on and promote science and biobased innovations in the BioInnovate Africa countries of implementations and beyond
3	Business leaders and entrepreneurs.	BioInnovate Africa provides opportunities for academia and industry in eastern Africa to work together to commercialise bio-based technologies and products.	BioInnovate Africa project team leaders, BioInnovate Africa implementing partners organizations, potential partners, and innovators
4	Consumers of BioInnovate Africa products and communities.	BioInnovate Africa provides a healthy alternative for food and feed, and environmentally sustainable solutions.	Farmers, community members (end-users/beneficiaries), non-governmental organisations (NGOs)/civil society organisations (CBOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and general public
5	Investors and development partners.	BioInnovate Africa offers opportunities for collaborative partnerships in developing competitive bio-based enterprises - businesses of tomorrow.	National, regional, and international funding agencies that support bio-based ideas and innovations similar to BioInnovate Africa; foundations and private agencies, government bodies and commissions; United Nation (UN) agencies; European Union (EU); African Union (AU)
6	Media and general public.	BioInnovate Africa creates value for humanity and improves people's lives through sustainable innovations.	The mass media (media owners, editors, and journalists):

¹ These are broad key messages, which will be packaged in various ways and forms appropriate for a given audience at a particular time.

			television, radio, print (newspaper and magazine), online pages (web-based and social media); general public.
7	Other Internal audiences	BioInnovate Africa is organised and implemented with the highest level of professionalism and efficiency to achieve its mission.	BioInnovate Africa Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), <i>icipe</i> , BioInnovate Africa Programme Management Office (PMO), BioInnovate Africa project leaders, project partners, and fellows among others.

5. Channels

BioInnovate Africa will use both media and non-media communication channels, including the website, mainstream media such as television (TV) and radio, multi-media, social media, publications, and events. The channels will be adopted appropriately to capture the attention of and effectively engage with the target audience. The communication channels are described in more detail as follows:

BioInnovate Africa website

Programme and project-related information will be shared on the BioInnovate Africa website. Regular updates will be made on the website regarding events, project results, success stories, and achievements. The BioInnovate Africa website also has a blog section where stories from the partners are shared, and a news section that provides regional and global bioeconomy-related updates.

Mainstream media

- a. National media: The involvement with the national radio and TV of the partner countries for the role they play in creating awareness and interest in innovations. Coverage of BioInnovate Africa activities and impact will enable BioInnovate Africa to reach key decision makers in eastern Africa. **TV and radio will be used by BioInnovate Africa project implementing partners, and only where rates are offered for free.**
- b. Local media (TV and community radio): These channels target the smallholder farmers who are best reached using local community radio, especially those that broadcast in the local language. They will be used **by BioInnovate Africa project implementing partners, and only where rates are offered for free.**
- c. In collaboration with the partner organisations, interviews, question and answer (Q&A) sessions, and talks will be held in these stations targeting the farmers and other end users of the bioinnovations. BioInnovate Africa project teams will be responsible for ensuring the documentation and media coverage of the specific project in their respective national and local media.
- d. Print media (newspapers and relevant magazines): Proactive use of media space – writing opinion pieces/sourcing interviews and writing press releases and media advisories on topical issues related to bioinnovations in eastern Africa. BioInnovation Africa to also use channels such as Science and Development Network (SciDevNet), The Organic Farmer, Media for Environment, Science, Health, and Agriculture in Kenya (MESHA), and Bioeconomista, where rates are offered for free. Print will also be used occasionally to advertise calls for proposals and tender opportunities.

Multi-media

- a. Documentaries to demonstrate the impact of BioInnovate Africa. The development of the documentaries will use the storytelling approach.
- b. Short informational/learning podcasts (video or audio of between 3 to 5 minutes) for each innovation, testimonials from programme beneficiaries and partners.
- c. Webinars will be used to provide information and engagement with target audiences for

BioInnovate Africa calls for concept notes, proposals, and other events.

- d. Updated gallery on Flickr with photos captured during BioInnovate Africa events. Photos will be credited to BioInnovate Africa or partner organisations.
- e. Quick Response (QR) Code: The BioInnovate Africa QR code allows for easy scanning by use of a digital device to access the website, social media channels, collection of feedback, survey, and registration of events.

Social media

These channels will be used to promote information from the website, share photos and videos related to BioInnovate Africa activities. The use of social media is not only for internal communication within project teams, but also for the wider community to convey human interest/success stories and project milestones achieved. BioInnovate Africa focus channels include:

- a. X (formerly Twitter): the purpose is to increase recognition, increase social engagement, establish an online social network, find leads, establish a brand, searchability.
- b. Facebook: the purpose is to increase recognition, increase social engagement, establish an online social network, and improve searchability.
- c. LinkedIn: the purpose is to increase social engagement, increase recognition, establish an online social network, and improve searchability.
- d. YouTube: the purpose is to use videos to increase recognition, increase engagement, and establish a brand.
- e. Blog: the purpose is to increase recognition, increase engagement, and searchability.

Publications²

- a. Biannually e-newsletter, to communicate both programme and project activities shared via the BioInnovate Africa MailChimp to the partners and other stakeholders to ignite and showcase opportunities for further collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- b. Information, education, and communication (IEC) materials: These include brochures, banners and flyers, and memorabilia (notebooks, pens, drinkable water bottles, and bags).

Events

BioInnovate Africa will participate in national, regional, and international events. These may include:

- a. *icipe* and partner organisation events (seminars, conferences/workshops, exhibitions, and demonstrations) organised as part of the annual programme activities.
- b. International seminars, workshops, and conferences that are relevant to the work of BioInnovate Africa will be used as a platform to showcase BioInnovation Africa's achievements.
- c. Local or regional events BioInnovate Africa will participate in: These include technology open days, local trade, and agricultural fairs to showcase innovations promoted by project partners.
- d. Media tours: Guided visits to project locations and field-based interviews with project partners and the consumers of the bioinnovations.

² These and other related communication products are developed following *icipe*-wide brand identity guideline except for the specific BioInnovate Africa colour expressed in its logo.

6. Expected results

The expected outcomes of this communication strategy are:

- a.** Stakeholder appreciation, participation, and buy-in of the bio-based innovations in the region.
- b.** Enhanced visibility of BioInnovate Africa in eastern Africa and beyond.
- c.** Increased awareness of bioeconomy as a sustainable development pathway for the region.

Progress in achieving these outcomes will be measured at regular intervals (monthly, quarterly, and annually) using the following key indicators:

- a.** Quantitative indicators: i) Number of participants at BioInnovation Africa events, ii) website metrics, iii) Social media metrics, iv) media coverage, v) citations of BioInnovation Africa publications and stories.
- b.** Qualitative indicators: i) Profile of events in which BioInnovate Africa has participated in; and ii) impact stories and policy influences. The qualitative indicators will be measured through active engagement with the target audience, including using individual feedback forms, focus groups, and key messages gleaned from the media.

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