

Joint AAUN Australia Awards Agricultural Research Symposium, 16 November 2016, Nairobi, Kenya

On 16 November 2016, the second annual Joint AAUN Australia Awards Agricultural Research Symposium was held at the Southern Sun Mayfair Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The Symposium was co-hosted by AAUN, the Australia Awards, the University of Nairobi and the University of Sydney.

Symposium attendees broadened their understanding of Australia and Africa agricultural research links, and developed new collaborations, including identifying a new project around improving post-harvest management of fruit and vegetables in Nigeria and Kenya.

The event attracted over 65 participants from both Australia and Africa, including the 26 Awardees participating in the Australia Awards Africa short course 'Increasing the Development Impact of Agricultural Research' (IDIAR) funded by the Australian Government. In addition, Symposium participants included agricultural academics presenting in the IDIAR program from Australia and Africa, along with representatives from Nairobi-based agricultural research institutions and the private sector.

The day commenced with an opening session themed on 'Innovating for Agricultural Impact: Lessons for Africa, Lessons for Australia'. This opening session was attended by a senior member of the Government of Kenya, the Hon Willy Bett, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. Also in attendance was the Australian High Commissioner to Kenya His Excellency John Feakes. Prof Lydia Njenga, Chair of the Board of Postgraduate Studies from the University of Nairobi, represented the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, and Professor Robyn McConchie from the University of Sydney and academic director of the IDIAR course, welcomed the participants on behalf of Professor John Hearn from AAUN. Prof John Kimenju, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Nairobi, gave the vote of thanks for the opening session.

Following the opening session, three panel sessions were held. The first panel focused on the International Year of Pulses. Dr Bruce Pengelly from Australia spoke on 'Pulses in Systems: SIMLESA Sustainable intensification of maize-legume systems for Food Security in eastern and southern Africa', a project funded by ACIAR, followed by Dr K. O. Falade from University of Ibadan speaking on a pulse project funded under the AAUN's Partnership and Research Development Fund (PRDF).

The second panel focused on gender, agriculture and innovation platforms. Dr Annet A. Mulema, from ILRI and based in Ethiopia, spoke on the USAID-funded Africa RISING project in the Ethiopian Highlands. Professor Robyn McConchie spoke an ACIAR-funded project on nutrition-sensitive agricultural interventions for rural women in Tanzania. Prof Margaret Jesang Hutchinson, Department of Plant Science and Crop Protection, University of Nairobi, spoke of her experience as a woman researcher in agriculture.

Value chains and innovation was the focus of the third panel. Dr Evelyne Kiptot from the World Agroforestry Centre, ICRAF, based in Nairobi, spoke on another ACIAR-funded project 'Developing value chain innovation platforms to improve food security in East and Southern Africa'. Dr Robert Marchant, University of York, gave a presentation titled 'Past, present and future social-ecological-environmental system interactions in East Africa: changing environments = changing values'. Dr Simon Wanjala Ormondi from KALRO, also based in Nairobi, spoke on bringing agriculture to the market through chain-wide collaboration.

After the panel presentations, the 26 Awardees from the IDIAR course gave a series of exhilarating one-minute, one-slide 'lightening' presentations highlighting the work that they would be

undertaking as part of their work plan on return, after the IDIAR course. This was a highlight of the day demonstrating the depth and breadth of the Awardees' research programs.

The plenary then broke into several working groups around gender, pulses, post-harvest, value chains and climate change. Each working group was tasked with looking for potential synergies and research collaborations for future work together, and each working group made a presentation on what they had achieved during the session. At least one working group formulated the outline of a project to apply to the AAUN PRDF.

Following these presentations, the Symposium drew to a close, and the vote of thanks was given by Dr Joseph Kimatu, South Eastern University College, Kenya, and Australia Awards alumnus.