

FISHERIES EXPERTS CONVERGE AT MAKERERE TO EXPLORE SYNERGIES IN THEIR PARTNERSHIPS

Expert academicians working in fisheries met at Makerere University, College of Natural Sciences (CoNAS) on the 1st and 2nd March to discuss means of making fisheries training and research more responsive to the needs of the sector in their countries. The experts were drawn from Malawi, Uganda, South Africa and Kenya. The purpose of the meeting was, 'conduct exchange visits among partner institutions: to explore synergies, learn lessons, sensitize university managers and garner greater support from partner institutions as well as associates'.

The participants of the meeting are working together on a European Union funded action project EDULINK: **Concerted Fit-for-purpose PhD training in aqua culture and fisheries to improve food security and livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa**. Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) in Malawi are working with University of Eldoret (UoE) in Kenya, Makerere University (Mak) in Uganda and Rhodes University in South Africa on the project. The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), and the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) were also present at the meeting as Associate partners on the project.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, the Principal of CoNAS, Professor J.Y.T. Mugisha welcomed participants to Uganda and Makerere University. He said, 'inter-disciplinary research is a dream where he wishes to see more sciences working together for better livelihoods of our population'. He also said, 'I would like to see the fit-for-purpose training trickle down to the undergraduate and Master's studies'. This is because that students graduating at Bachelors and Masters are more likely to work closely with the population as opposed to the PhD graduates. Collaborations are very welcome to Makerere because through synergies and sharing of resources is a value-addition to our institutions he noted. Prof. Mugisha also thanked RUFORUM for the continued support that it gives to Makerere and regional universities to improve research output. Thereafter, he declared the meeting open and wished the participants a fruitful meeting; the visitors, a wonderful stay in Uganda.

Dr. Eric Sande, Chair of the Department of Zoology, Entomology and Fisheries (ZEFs) which houses the fisheries unit at Makerere welcomed participants and shared the department's mandate. He said, 'the department has registered an increased number students and most studying fisheries'. He reiterated the support of the department to the project and wished the meeting fruitful deliberations.

The meeting was informed that the project team visited one of the leading universities in Europe; University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) that is situated in Vienna, Austria. The purpose of the visit to BOKU was: to network and learn best practices on ways of improving research and PhD training in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the lessons learnt from BOKU were highlighted as follows:

- Supervision should be shared between universities to ensure sharing of knowledge and expertise. It was noted that all expertise/equipment cannot be found at one institution.
- Students that register for PhD sign contracts as a means of show of commitment to the studies.
- Universities don't have all specialised equipment thus the importance of outsourcing from other institutions and government departments.
- The importance of the international office in a university was highlighted. The international office can manage administrative issues while the scientists concentrate on real science.

The meeting later received presentations from Strengthening Regional Capacity in Research and Training in Fisheries and Aquaculture for Improved Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Africa (STRECAFISH), a project that is coordinated by ZEFs; PhD and Masters students also presented their research. The second day was dedicated to review of the project work-plan, reporting to development partners, public engagement. The team also visited the Kajjansi Fisheries Research institute of NARO.